



## **Path to Purpose: When Selfishness Leads to Disaster**

Text: Genesis 13:1-18

Care and Bridging Pastor Dan Slagle

1. Do you find yourself tempted by status, money, or power? Do you often think about your next wardrobe, house, car, etc.? What is it about those things that captures our attention and affections? How does chasing after worldly things affect your decision making?
2. Read Genesis 13:1-18.
  - a. What was the problem that presented itself as Abram and his family returned to the Promised Land? (See vv. 6-7)
  - b. What made the land that Lot chose so attractive to him? What does this possibly reveal about his priorities?
  - c. What connections do you see between the words of the LORD to Abram in vv. 14-17 and Genesis 12:1-7? Why did God speak these words to Abram after the events that had just taken place?
  - d. How do Abram's actions here show greater faith and trust than his actions in 12:10-20?
3. Read 1 John 2:16.
  - a. How would you define or describe each element in the threefold pattern of temptation in your own words?
  - b. Pastor Dan makes the point that, unlike Lot, Abram wasn't entranced with what he could see, which allowed Abram to truly be free. How does resisting the temptation to chase after status and stuff allow us to truly be free?
  - c. What have you found helpful in battling the temptation towards selfishness?
  - d. Pastor Dan said, "when our focus is on pride, from that point forward everything is on us. When God is the focus, it's all up to him." How can we know if our focus is on our pride or on God? (See Study Deeper)
  - e. We all experience failure. How is the experience of failure different for someone who is focused on their pride versus someone who is focused on obedience to God?
4. Read Philippians 2:1-11
  - a. What does Paul mean when he says that Jesus "made himself nothing"? (v. 7)
  - b. How did Jesus express humility?
  - c. The experience of humility is important as it helps us resist our pride. However, we often go out of our way to avoid true humility because deep down we care about our stuff and what other people think about us. What area of your life do you need to surrender in order to experience humility? Are you concerned about your salary? The neighborhood you live

- in? Your child's sports performance or grades? Your shoes? Your car? What are some practical ways you can learn to let go of those areas of pride and learn to focus on God?
- d. How should Jesus' display of humility increase our humility?

Challenge: One way to kill our selfishness is to put ourselves in places where we can use our gifts, talents, passions, and abilities to serve others. Go to <http://faithbridge.org/serve-teams/> and <http://faithbridge.org/next-steps/bridging--the-road/> to look for ways you can put your faith in action and humbly serve those in and outside of the church.

Prayer:

"Oh, God, help us," we pray, "Please deliver us from the pride ... that we are prone to in our lives. Please, oh, God, deliver us from consumption, from what others think about us, and being consumed with how circumstances are going to affect us and what's going to be good for us. God, help us to think about what's good for others, help us to live for that which is good for those around us. Ultimately, oh, God, help us to be concerned with your glory, with living for your sake, for the sake of your name among people around us. God, we pray that you would save us from selfishness today, just in little things and big things in our lives, please save us from our selfishness and help us to live for the good of others and the glory of your name in all that we do today. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

<http://radical.net/podcast/148-the-temptation-of-selfishness-isaiah-398/>

## STUDY DEEPER

### 7 Ways Pride Grows in Our Hearts

Pride is universal—something we all deal with, ancient as Adam and relevant as the morning news. Yet we don't always see it, for it grows like weeds around our lives.

Oh, we see it in the obvious ways, but we can be blind to its deceptive, subversive presence in our hearts. We know the disease, but we don't recognize the symptoms. And that's why we need the insight of our Great Physician to reveal its symptoms and release us from its grip.

Here are seven symptoms of pride I've been seeing in God's Word as the Spirit works in my own life.

#### 1. Fear

Pride is at the root of fear and anxiety when we refuse to humbly rest in God's sovereign care. Fear simultaneously reveals our lack of trust and our poisonous self-reliance. We fear because we don't have faith in the Lord, are enormously preoccupied with ourselves, and lack self-control.

When Peter stepped out on the stormy sea to come to Jesus, he was walking in humble faith. But when his gaze shifted to his circumstances and to self-preservation, he trusted in himself, became afraid, and began to sink. Jesus saved him while admonishing him: "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matt. 14:31).

## **2. Entitlement**

Self-sacrifice stems from a humble heart. Entitlement is rooted in a prideful heart.

The core of the gospel is that we are not entitled to anything except just punishment for our sins (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Yet we deceive ourselves into thinking we're better than we are, and deserve better than we have. We think we deserve God's mercy. We think we deserve people's praise. We think we deserve love, success, comfort, accolades. We certainly don't think we deserve suffering, heartbreak, or discipline.

But when we experience these things, we grow bitter, frustrated, and disturbed because we believe we're entitled to more. We forget that apart from Jesus we are rebels who deserve only condemnation.

The disciples regularly wrestled with entitlement. On one occasion, they were arguing about who was the greatest. Jesus's response was a rebuke: "Let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves" (Luke 22:26).

## **3. Ingratitude**

Our proud hearts say that we're good, that we should get what we want, and if we don't, that we're justified in our ingratitude. If we're somehow uncomfortable or inconvenienced, we can complain. It's our right. Humility, meanwhile, recognizes that God is good and gives us what we need, so we have no reason to be ungrateful. We lack nothing (Deut. 2:7; Ps. 34:9).

The Israelites grumbled in the wilderness, though God fed, clothed, and led them through it (Ex. 16:2; Deut. 8:2). Their stubborn hearts rejected God's daily mercies out of self-idolization. But God's Word rebukes our whining: "Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent" (Phil. 2:14–15).

## **4. People-Pleasing**

Pride is self-worship and self-preservation at all costs—and people-pleasing is the direct result. Some think people-pleasing is a positive trait because they're so clearly concerned with serving others. But that's nothing more than a sneaky sheepskin we put over a wolfish habit. People-pleasing is all about self-satisfaction—fearing man more than God—and seeking the fleeting happiness that comes from man's approval.

The apostle Paul knew human approval was a pointless and prideful pursuit. Thus he could say, "Am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10).

## **5. Prayerlessness**

Pride deceives us into thinking we can "do life" on our own—we're capable, independent, unstoppable, self-reliant. We think that we don't need God every hour, that we don't need his help, grace, mercy, courage, and hope. So, surely, we don't need to pray.

But a humble heart submits itself to God in prayer because it knows it can do nothing without him.

When God called Jonah to go to Nineveh, Jonah's response was not to go to God in prayer. Instead, he fled, his heart furiously and arrogantly silent (Jonah 1:3). Only when God humbled him in the fish's belly did Jonah finally cry out in prayer (2:1).

## **6. Hypocrisy**

When you're proud, you elevate your status, forgetting the mercy God has shown you. You think you're better than everyone else, so you easily find fault with others. Pride produces a hypocritical spirit.

The Pharisees' hypocritical pride blinded them both to their sin and to God's mercy—which made them cold-hearted and cruel toward others. Jesus had harsh words for them:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. (Matt. 23:27)

## **7. Rebellion**

Rebellion against God manifests itself in resistance to God's Word and God-ordained spiritual leaders. It's the reflex of a prideful heart. It also shows itself in a lack of submission—wives to husbands, children to parents, employees to bosses, citizens to government. Rebellion says, I know better than you, God, when I don't.

Even though Adam and Eve had all they needed for life and joy, they pridefully rebelled against God's good decree, thinking they knew better than him. And this ancient rebellion brought untold pain, suffering, and death—for them and us.

## **Humbled for Us**

Yet there is hope for the proud heart in the incarnation of humility, Jesus Christ. Immanuel—God with us—condescended to live among us, die for us, and raise us to new life. He never had a shred of sinful pride—no fear, no entitlement, no ingratitude, no people-pleasing, no prayerlessness, no hypocrisy, no rebellion (Phil. 2:4–6).

The God-man emptied himself of all he deserved to save us from all we deserve. He who was entitled to the highest honor forfeited it for our eternal good.

Because of his humility, we can be forgiven of our pride. That's both the sting and the joy of the gospel. It deals with our pride by destroying it, reminding us that life is not about us, and that we deserve only the wrath of God. Jesus also deals with our pride by taking the just punishment for it on himself, that we might be renewed in the image of our Creator (Col. 3:10) and made humble like our Savior.

Being humbled is not smooth or painless, but it's the daily rescue we need. Hallelujah to the Redeemer we have.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/7-ways-pride-grow-in-our-hearts/>